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NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

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PREPARING CLASSROOM TEACHERS FOR THEIR ROLE IN NUTRITION EDUCATION

SCHOOL CHILDREN NEED TO EAT BETTER

Surveys of the food practices of school-age boys and girls clearly indicate need for more effective nutrition education. Daily intakes of certain nutrients are frequently found short of amounts recommended for good nutrition in children. Furthermore, diets tend to worsen rather than improve, as children continue through the grades into high school.

What can be done to reverse this trend? How can children best be helped to develop good food habits? How can elementary schools strengthen and broaden their contribution to nutrition education?

TOWARD BETTER FOOD PRACTICES

A promising approach to helping children to better food habits is that of preparing classroom teachers to play a larger role in nutrition education. Educators are coming to recognize that teachers need some background in the subject matter of nutrition and in the educational techniques for making it function in order to cope with the specialized and complex task of helping boys and girls select well-balanced diets.

This issue of Nutrition Committee News is devoted to a consideration of education in nutrition for classroom teachers-in-training. It reports practices in some States and educational institutions providing such training. It tells about experiences in setting objectives for courses, "selling" the idea, developing courses and teaching methods suited to needs and readiness of teachers in training and their pupils, offering "elective" courses, and helping get State education agencies to require nutrition for certification of elementary school teachers.

PRESERVICE EDUCATION IN NUTRITION

Colleges and universities pioneering in nutrition instruction for classroom teachers provide courses usually to satisfy requirements for State certification or college degrees. Frequently nutrition courses are offered as electives to elementary education majors.

Nutrition Instruction to Satisfy State Certification Requirements

A few State Departments of Education require that for a certificate to teach in elementary schools teachers have a set minimum number of credit hours in nutrition. Such regulations make it mandatory for colleges and universities that train teachers in elementary education in those States to offer courses meeting requirements.

Four States require teachers to have had a course in nutrition. Indiana offers its foods and nutrition course in the home economics department. Kentucky, Tennessee, and Iowa specify a minimum number of semester hours of nutrition in the general health area. This permits teaching the course in any of several departments.

In more than 20 States some nutrition is undoubtedly included in required courses in health education or physical education. Required credit hours vary from 3 to 10.

The other States have no requirements in curriculum areas which usually include some nutrition. In one of these, Illinois, several major teacher education institutions provide some training in nutrition for prospective classroom teachers. This often includes experience in teaching nutrition units and in the school lunch program. Of 14 colleges responding to a recent inquiry, 1 *requires* course work both in nutrition and in food preparation for graduation in elementary education; 11 offer 1 or more courses in nutrition which may be *elected* by elementary majors—3 courses are for elementary majors only; the other 2 colleges reported no course in nutrition.

NUTRITION AND HOME AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Since 1942, qualifications for a certificate to teach in Indiana's elementary schools, have included a minimum of 2 to 3 semester hours of college credit in nutrition and home and family relationships.

This issue of NCN has been prepared by Mrs. Ethel Austin Martin, author of the November-December 1954 issue.

Each major teacher education institution of Indiana offers a course or courses meeting certification requirements. The courses are taught in the home economics department in the 18 colleges of the State that have a home economics curriculum under such titles as Nutrition, Nutrition and Home and Family Living for Elementary Teachers, and Personal and Family Relations.

In colleges having no home economics department, the course, usually called Health and Nutrition, is taught in the health education department. Indiana also has a certification requirement of 2 to 3 credit hours in physical education. Nutrition sometimes is considered in courses designed to meet this requirement.

Learning by Doing.—The Indiana State Teachers College, Terre Haute, meets the certification requirement by offering a 4-term hour course known as Nutrition and Home and Family Living for Elementary Teachers. In the 10-year span following 1941, a period covering 21 school terms, 518 men and women students enrolled in the course. Major objectives of the course are: "To help elementary teachers identify subject matter and experiences in the elementary school curriculum through which better home and family living can be emphasized," and "to promote an understanding of the food needs of the body and methods of helping children and their families to improve their food habits."

Direct experiences are a feature of the course. The instructor and her students work with administrators and regular teachers in the laboratory school to develop experiences that should be mutually profitable to the children and the teachers-in-training. Then prospective teachers get practice in testing the plans with children. Completion of food preparation is made to coincide with the children's mid-morning snack time or regular lunch time. Students in a recent group doubted that fourth graders could cook a meal until they helped fourth graders through such an experience. In a college-wide survey, students voted the course the one that best provided experiences effective in coping with problems in student teaching.

Recognition of the pioneer contribution Indiana State Teachers College made to pre-service training in nutrition education of teachers was its selection as the setting for the National Nutrition Workshop for Staff Members of Teacher Education Institutions in 1944. The report "A Nutrition Workshop Comes to the Campus" is still a valuable reference. Copies may be borrowed from USDA's Nutrition Programs Service.

EMPHASIS ON COMMUNITY NUTRITION

Since 1948 Kentucky has required for certification as an elementary school teacher a 2-semester hour course in nutrition. This didn't "just happen." It was the result of long-time cooperative efforts of professional groups, particularly from 1943 to 1947.

World conditions had focused attention on health as a national problem to be faced by schools if they were to meet community needs. In studying needed action Kentucky found that teachers should have a better background in health education with emphasis on nutrition. Three developments pointed up the importance of nutrition.

(1) *A teacher education study.* In 1943–47, a cooperative study in teacher education, directed by the Division of Teacher Education and Certification, State Department of Education, focused on two questions: Can education improve the quality of living in the community? and, What preparation does a teacher need in order to serve effectively in a community school? From the first the participating teachers gave answers that included problems related to nutritional needs of children.

(2) *School lunch growth.* During the period of the study the State school lunch program grew from 400 to 1,000 schools. As the program expanded more teachers requested help in planning related programs on a sound educational basis.

(3) *More health education recommended for teachers-in-training.* In 1944 a pilot study in health education was undertaken in 12 school systems. An important outcome was the recommendation of the study's health committee to require 6 instead of only 4 semester hours in health education.

In 1947 the Division of Teacher Education and Certification recommended the 6 semester hours in health education to the Advisory Committee to the Council on Public Education. Recognizing that the added hours were needed in nutrition, the committee recommended to the council that 2 of the 6 semester hours be specified for nutrition. The recommendation then went to the State Board of Education. The regulation was adopted in December 1947 to become effective the following September.

State Health Agency Cooperates.—Kentucky recognizes that the character of the college courses in nutrition and the qualifications of their instructors are important. Accordingly instructors meet with experts in nutrition education periodically for discussion of common problems, subject matter, and methods of teaching nutrition.

To help instructors relate course content to current community nutrition problems the Nutrition Division of the State Health Department assumes chief responsibility for the conferences. Members of the division consult with individual college instructors in the field on nutrition problems.

Value of Nutrition Personalized.—The certification requirement is met at the University of Kentucky with a course, Principles of Nutrition, offered in the Home Economics Department. For 25 years, the university has re-

quired such a course for a degree in elementary education. Success in this pioneer effort was undoubtedly a factor in the State's decision to require nutrition for certification.

The course is designed to give teachers confidence in their knowledge of nutrition. Selection of food is made personal in the belief that if teachers are convinced of the value of adequate food to their personal nutritional health they will be more ready and able to help their pupils understand nutrition. Application of suitable teaching methods to classroom learning situations is considered, with emphasis on integrating nutrition with other subjects.

Nutrition Instruction to Satisfy College Degree Requirements

Many schools require, or offer as an elective, a course in nutrition for students working toward a degree in elementary education. Experiences of some institutions, which are voluntarily offering such courses, suggest the breadth of interest in preservice education in nutrition and indicate the various approaches being made to meet needs as seen by college instructors, student teachers, and pupils.

BASIS—STATE NUTRITION PROBLEMS

A course in Nutrition Fundamentals, offered by the Home Economics Department of New Mexico Western College, is elected primarily by students preparing to teach children. Emphasis is placed on nutrition problems revealed in a New Mexico study. After studying the basic principles of nutrition, students plan units of work applicable to the grade levels and schools in which they expect to teach.

In developing a unit of work for a specific grade level, students include goals, activities, illustrative materials, and references. They try out their lesson plans in the college's elementary laboratory school or elsewhere and evaluate their effectiveness. The State Health Department nutritionist provides consultant service. Students who have taken the course feel "that every prospective elementary teacher should have it."

FOOD, HEALTH, AND BUDGETING

An elective course in nutrition education at the University of Maine is largely attended by elementary majors. "Food, health, and budgeting, slanted toward broader education in the field, with some attention paid to ways of teaching nutrition to children" describes the course.

PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS DEVELOP OWN COURSE

In a nutrition course at Farmington State Teachers College in Maine, elementary education majors establish objectives of the course and outline ways of achieving them. Good use is made of the findings from the State Experiment Station's studies of the nutritional health of Maine children in relation to their diets. Goals, content, and resources for nutrition activities are explored and evaluated.

ORIENTATION IN NUTRITION

The Home Economics Department of Central Washington College of Education requires of all students a 3-credit hour orientation course in nutrition. The course gives a perspective on human nutrition including its meaning in terms of individual health and some simple everyday steps that contribute to good nutritional health. Furthermore, it helps students develop critical judgment of nutritional findings and materials.

NUTRITION EDUCATION METHODS

Also, Central Washington College of Education offers upperclassmen in elementary education an elective 1-credit hour course, Nutrition Activities in the Elementary Grades. Ways of interpreting nutrition to children are stressed. Together teacher and students develop teaching units in nutrition. As a term project, each student has a turn as teacher with fellow students as pupils.

NUTRITION INTEGRATED WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

At Texas Technological College a course, Principles and Application of Nutrition for Elementary School Teachers, is offered annually to elementary education majors at the master's degree level.

Students make numerous applications of food and nutrition facts to their own diets and those of children. Nutrition education methods for children are reviewed. Students integrate their knowledge into various subject matter areas. Later they prepare a teaching unit including subject matter, means of motivation, samples of illustrative materials, and plans for evaluation.

COURSE ADAPTED TO STUDENTS

The College of Education, University of Georgia, has required 5 quarter-credit hours in nutrition education for elementary education majors since 1945. Objectives, problems, and activities vary with the needs of each student group. Typical objectives are to help prospective teachers gain some understanding of children's interests and nutritional needs at different age levels, discover some effective methods of teaching nutrition, become aware of the school lunch as a teaching medium, and get acquainted with resources for carrying out an effective nutrition program.

Typical of the major problems considered by classes are how to help children with problems related to nutrition and how to bring parents into the nutrition program and help them understand the relation of nutrition to child health. To make the course more functional future teachers observe in city and county schools each week, prepare a plan of work for use in their own teaching the following year, help evaluate teaching materials in nutrition, take turns teaching the class (with fellow students as pupils), and visit a community organization that helps individuals and families with nutrition problems.

The foregoing accounts indicate the type of efforts schools are making to prepare teachers to deal effectively with nutrition education of elementary school children. Such programs do not infringe on or duplicate the general health courses which are usually offered on the same campuses. It was heartening to learn through correspondence with Dr. H. F. Kilander in 1952 (then with the U. S. Office of Education), that "Probably two-thirds of the teachers colleges and schools of education require their students to take a course in *school health* which may be listed under a variety of titles . . . most, if not all, of these courses, give some emphasis to the subject of nutrition."

Planning Ahead

Many nutrition committees are giving attention to the advancement of preservice education in nutrition for classroom teachers. In New Hampshire, for example, an active subcommittee, representing two teacher education colleges, the University, the State Board of Education, the State Health Department, and elementary school teachers and nurses, is studying how to demonstrate the need of nutrition courses for elementary education majors. In Maine, a subcommittee with the State Elementary Supervisor as chairman is getting underway. The Ohio Nutrition Committee has considered ways of making colleges more aware of the importance of nutrition training for teachers.

As early as 1946 the Texas Nutrition Council, through its Nutrition in Schools Committee, began trying to stimulate colleges of the State to offer courses in nutrition education. In 1952 the council's plan of work called for: Recommending to the Texas Education Agency that nutrition instruction be included in the core curriculum for certification of teachers; and offering to help the agency set up standards for nutrition instruction of teacher trainees.

The Nevada Nutrition Council has led the movement for preservice nutrition education in its State. The council began with a questionnaire survey of the thinking and practices of educators in Nevada and other States. The council studied the returns and in early 1955 recommended to the Dean of the College of Education of the University of Nevada that consideration be given to establishing preservice education in nutrition for elementary teachers in that institution.

PROS AND CONS OF CERTIFICATION

A community group wishing to spur local interest in preservice education will inevitably face such questions as: What are the relative merits of State certification requirements and those adopted voluntarily by colleges? Which are the preferred curriculum areas for offering nutrition education?

The certification requirement seems at first thought to offer the ideal answer to more effective nutrition education for elementary school children. Certainly it would provide more nutrition courses and reach more prospective teachers than any other way. But a requirement "on the books" does not necessarily guarantee satisfactory results. If colleges offer nutrition courses before they feel the need for them or are properly staffed to do so, the outcome may be disappointing.

In some States, as in Nevada, the plan is for educational institutions voluntarily to establish their own nutrition courses. Such a plan offers a way for preservice education to spread gradually—one institution at a time—as each is ready. This procedure may or may not serve as a stepping stone to the eventual adoption of a certification requirement.

The Outlook

It is expected that the movement to increase preservice nutrition education of teachers will grow. Other programs than those cited are functioning. Many are in exploratory or preliminary stages. And while the surface has scarcely been scratched, the experiences of a few pioneers should lend encouragement to the groups and institutions that hope to extend such facilities in their own States.

The success of any plan is contingent on the character of the nutrition course itself. Perhaps the first step is to set clear-cut objectives such as those of the University of Kentucky—to give prospective teachers "a belief in nutrition as a basis of health, a sound knowledge of nutrition, and an introduction to ways of teaching nutrition and of using suitable materials. . . ." From there on much depends upon the qualifications of the instructors whose responsibility it is to develop and present the courses in nutrition education. Strong, interesting, and functional courses call for college instructors in this area who—

Have a grasp of the subject matter of nutrition.

Have an understanding of the relation of nutrition to health.

Can teach students how to develop learning situations.

Can help prospective teachers see the need for knowing parents, homes, and nutrition problems in the community.

Can help students foresee some of the situations they will meet.

Have the ability to communicate their own interest and enthusiasm to their students who are to become the classroom teachers.

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